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ABSTRACT

The potential for affective learning by college students was measured through a T-group experience that combined a T-group method with a course in family relationships. Investigated were changes in verbal behavior, the experimental group's influence as models, personality and grade point changes as well as the sociometric influence of T-group participants and nonparticipants. The results of the study indicate the following: a) transfer and modeling of verbal behavior did take place; and b) T-group experience was significantly related to the participants' ability to behave in such a way to receive recognition by peers for outstanding contribution to the classroom learning of others. No changes were observed in personality measures or in grade point average. (Author/JA)

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AN APPLICATION OF T-GROUP METHOD TO THE TEACHING OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

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In recent years considerable interest has been generated concerning the group process and phenomenon variously referred to as T-group method, sensitivity training, human relations labs and basic encounter groups. This approach to group dynamics dates back to 1947 and since that time these group sessions have increased in popularity until today they are being conducted by universities, industry, churches, public school systems, the Y.M.C.A., and a multitude of other social, educational, and business organizations.

It is evident that not all people can or do profit from participation in the experience, and that in the case of those who do benefit, the effects vary both in kind and intensity, thus adding to the difficulties encountered in attempting to specify the nature of these changes. Previous reviews by Buchanan (1964); Campbell and Dunnette (1968); House (1967); and Stock (1964); point to contradictory and inconclusive results.

The investigation of behavioral change using the T-group as the independent variable is particularly unique since it assigns as much, if not more importance, to the role of affective learning as to cognitive learning and skill training. The assignment of importance to an emotional factor in learning presents unique difficulties in determining which variables best reflect this factor and how they should be measured. In this study the dependent variables chosen were verbal behavior, selected personality dimensions, the grade point average and perceived contribution to the

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classroom learning of peers. The hypotheses center around the questions of transfer of learning from the T-group to the classroom and with the ability of the T-group participants to cause similar changes in the attitudes and verbal behavior of nonparticipants in the back-home setting. The following hypotheses were tested:

1. The Positive Verbal Index score will be significantly greater for the experimental group (T-group participants) than for the control group (non T-group participants).
2. The Positive Verbal Index score will be significantly greater for control group subjects who are members of unstructured groups containing experimental group subjects than in groups containing no experimental group subjects.
3. Congruence between self and ideal self will be significantly greater for the experimental group than for the control group.
4. Scores on both the Love and Dominance dimensions on the self measure of the Interpersonal Check List (ICL) will be significantly greater for the experimental group than for the control group.
5. Significantly more control group subjects will achieve an increase in grade point average than will experimental group subjects, based upon a comparison of the experimental quarter with the previous quarter.
6. Members of the experimental group will be rated significantly more often as having contributed more to the learning experience of the other subjects in Family Relationships than will the control group.

Method

In order to control the maximum number of variables while still being able to measure transfer of training and effect upon nonparticipants, it was decided to combine T-group method with a classroom course in Family Relationships. The justification for measuring the effects of T-group method as it relates to Family Relationships is especially valid since the goals of both Family Relationships and T-group method are almost identical as approached by these writers. In Family Relationships they are:

1. To gain a familiarity with current facts, research, and ideas in the area of family life education.

2. To learn to communicate feelings rather than superficial comments.

3. To identify and help other class members identify their strengths and develop greater self-understanding, self-awareness, and a more positive attitude toward self.

4. To develop more positive feelings of trust, respect, and love for other people.

The latter three goals are also the goals or areas of emphasis for T-group method as defined in this study. As is frequently the case, they are not well operationalized as goals since there must be wide latitude for each individual to determine how he will interpret them in terms of his own individuality. They are, of course, operationalized as dependent variables within this study.

The subjects were freshmen and sophomores enrolled in Family

Relationships. The original sample consisted of the total class membership of 34 females and 36 males all of whom were initially involved as potential participants in the study as members of either the experimental or control group. The experimental group (T-group participants) was formed by randomly selecting 15 subjects who volunteered for the two day "retreat" since the term T-group was not used. After screening, due to physical and psychological considerations and dropping of subjects who failed to complete posttest data, 60 subjects were retained. The control group was composed of 30 subjects who did not volunteer for the T-group plus 15 volunteers, while the experimental group contained 15 volunteers. Pretest measures revealed no significant differences between volunteers and nonvolunteers on the variables under consideration.

The data collecting instruments consisted of Leary's Interpersonal Check List (ICL), and the Positive Verbal Index Scale (PVIS) developed by the authors. The ICL was administered in the regular classroom setting. The verbal behavior which was used to arrive at a Postive Verbal Index (PVI) score was audio taped and rated according to the PVIS from random samples of the verbal behavior recorded within 1-1/2 hour unstructured discussion groups. All 60 subjects participated in a discussion group containing from seven to eleven subjects with various proportions of T-group participants. The group members were told that the instructor would not determine the direction of the group, but rather the time was theirs to use as they saw fit to achieve the course goals.

The PVIS consists of four levels of classification, two positive and two negative. One of the negative levels is basically the converse of a positive level, with all verbalizations at this level being scored plus

minus one point, depending upon content. More potent positive statements are scored plus two with comparably potent negative statements receiving a value of minus two. The one-point plus and minus levels, designated level II and level III respectively, are essentially an opposition between statements which deal with the "here and now" content of the group level (level II) as opposed to behavior and events outside the group (level III).

Statements receiving plus two points in value are assigned to level I and are concerned with feelings, being open to others as manifest by a willingness to reveal personal strengths and weaknesses, and taking the risk inherent in confronting another group member with constructive criticism or an overt statement of admiration. Level IV, on the other hand, deals with verbalizations which are frankly negative, malicious, or in which he does not own up to feelings. The PVIS is calculated by dividing the sum of each person's score by the number of units scored for him. A new unit is scored each time a different person speaks or each time an individual's verbal behavior changes from behavior representing one category to another. Figure 1 is an illustration of this theoretical framework.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework

+2	I	Overtly positive statements about self and other group members; constructive confrontation; constructive criticism; "I feel," "I'm happy," "that upsets me;" owns up to weakness or problem; reflects, clarifies feelings; "thank you," "excuse me"		B
+1	II	Here and now without feelings; covertly positive; positive without saying "I am pleased;" general statements about love, trust; covert confrontation or aid to other group member; reflects or clarifies ideas; covert admission to weakness or problem	A	B
-1	III	People and situations not in group; "we," "they," "most people;" reflects lack of positive action; mild disapproval of self or others not overtly stated (judgmental); irrelevant comment; hypothetical examples	A	
-2	IV	Malicious statements; gossip (non-family); deflates other's status; rejects feelings of others; defensive; interrupts; attributing derogatory behaviors or feelings to others in the group which cannot be directly observed		B

Key: A. Here and now as opposed to then and there

B. Feelings, openness, confrontation, risk taking, owning up as opposed to frankly negative, malicious, not owning up

Figure 1. The System of Categories Used in the Positive Verval Index Scale

Results

Posttest measures were administered nine weeks after the T-group experience. The findings make it clear that this T-group experience significantly modified the verbal behavior of the experimental group as predicted in hypothesis 1, and that their model led to significant modification of the control group's verbal behavior as predicted in hypothesis 2. The critical value of chi square for significance at the .001 level in both cases is 16.3 while the obtained value for the two hypotheses is 165.4 and 102.3 respectively.

The control group in hypothesis 1 is defined as those control group subjects who were in informal discussion groups with no experimental subjects present. This is necessary in order to avoid the interaction effects which would be a source of experimental contamination as pertaining to this hypothesis if the experimental group members are capable of influencing control group members as predicted in hypothesis 2. The PVI score for the combined controls was - .6040 and .1808 for the combined experimentals. An inspection of Table 1 shows that members of the control group verbalized well above the expected frequency for negatively valued units and well below the expected frequency for positively scored units. The experimental group, on the other hand, emitted the opposite frequencies being well above the expectation for positive verbalizations and below that expected within the negative levels.

Table 1

TABLE 1

Number of Observed and Expected (e) Units Within the Four Levels of the PVIS For Control Group Subjects With no Experimental Group Subjects Present in Discussion Groups and Total Units for All Experimental Group Subjects.

Group	Level I (+2) O (e)	Level II (+1) O (e)	Level III (-1) O (e)	Level IV (-2) O (e)	Totals
Control	8 (26)	135 (227)	462 (365)	39 (26)	664
Experimental	43 (25)	317 (225)	264 (361)	12 (25)	636*
TOTALS	51	452	726	51	1280

*p< .001

An examination of Table 2 pertaining to hypothesis 2 reveals that controls without experimental group subjects present verbalized above the expected frequency for negatively valued units and below the expected level for positively scored units. With experimental group subjects present, however, the opposite occurred. The PVI score for the combined control group subjects with no experimental group subjects present is -.6040 while it is -.1052 for those combined control group subjects who are members of discussion groups containing members of the experimental group.

Table 2

Number of Observed and Expected (e) Units Within the Four Levels of the PVIS For Control Group Subjects With No Experimental Group Subjects Present in Discussion Groups and For Control Group Subjects with Experimental Group Subjects Present

Group	Level I (+2)		Level II (+1)		Level III (-1)		Level IV (-2)		Totals
	0	(e)	0	(e)	0	(e)	0	(e)	
Control w/o	8	(16)	135	(224)	462	(366)	39	(38)	644
Control with	36		472	(383)	530	(626)	64	(65)	1102*
TOTALS	44		607		992		103		1746

* $p < .001$

A third significant finding confirmed hypothesis 6. A sociometric question was used to allow all subjects to rate the contribution of others to their own learning. That question being, "Write the names or numbers of the five people in this class who have contributed most to your learning experience in Family Relationships." A summary of the analysis of variance of differences between the control group and the experimental group in terms of mean number of votes received is presented in Table 3. The F-value of 11.6125 for this comparison is significant beyond the .01 level.

Table 3

TABLE 3

Analysis of Variance For Peer Ratings in the Comparison of the Experimental (E) and Control (C) Groups.

	TREATMENTS E	C	Totals
N =	15	45	60
ΣX =	113	136	249
ΣX^2 =	1231	1162	2393

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F
Treatments	255.6165	2	127.8082	6.4828
Within Treatments	1104.0335	56	19.7148	
TOTAL	1359.6500			

Comparisson	SS	F
D_1 = E Compared to C	228.9388	11.6125*

An F-value of 7.12 is required for significance at the .01 level with 1 and 56 degrees of freedom to test the comparisons.

* $p < .01$

Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5, were rejected in that no significant differences were found between experimentals and controls in terms of congruence between self and ideal-self, Love or Dominance as measured by the ICL or in grade point average.

Discussion

The current study seems to be somewhat unique in that the dependent variables are not only of value in researching T-group method, but they are also primary outcome variables of the college course in which the study was conducted. The modification of verbal behavior demonstrated here also increases the usefulness of T-group method as a tool for the change within education which is called for by Rogers. He states that "One of the most effective means yet discovered for facilitating constructive learning, growth and change ... is the T-group ..." (Rogers, 1969, p. 305).

It is interesting to note that none of the hypotheses concerning personality dimensions yielded significant finding. Any attempt to state whether this is a weakness of the ICL, T-group method or this study would be tenuous other than to quote Campbell and Dunnette's observation that "An internal criterion which has so far yielded completely negative results, is the standardized personality measure" (1968, p. 95).

The results of this study indicate some potential promise for the Positive Verbal Index Scale as an instrument for studies of T-group verbal behavior. It incorporates some qualities of Bales' Interaction Process Analysis technique (Bales, 1950) and Argyris' system of analyzing T-group type verbal behavior (Argyris, 1964) in such a way as to be appropriate to T-group research as is Argyris' method while maintaining much of the simplicity of Bales' system.

A frequent outcome of a T-group experience is an expressed feeling of euphoria, love and increased self worth. These feelings have often been dismissed as of little scientific value since they are difficult to measure and may be of value only "as aesthetic appreciation or recreational enjoyment" (Campbell and Dunnette, 1968, p. 101). On the other hand, if it can be determined what variables lead to such stated feelings, it may then be possible to research causes and reproduce the feelings in a predictable manner and one which is capable of replication.

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